

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 001506

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: ECUADOR'S PARTICIPATION IN MERCOSUR SUMMIT  
UNREMARKABLE

REF: QUITO 1403

1. (U) Summary: On June 18 Alfredo Palacio embarked on his first international visit as president of Ecuador, arriving in Asuncion, Paraguay, for the 28th Mercosur Summit. He went with two main objectives: to form and strengthen bilateral ties with other South American countries, and to publicly express his position towards integration in the region. Palacio secured meetings with three of his peers, the presidents of Colombia, Uruguay, and Chile. He also delivered a brief pro-integration speech in front of the assembled summit body of chiefs of state of Mercosur and associated countries. End Summary.

#### President Palacio Experiments with Bilateral Networking

-----

2. (U) Though Palacio's arrival and two-night stay in Asuncion was met with little fanfare (he was met by no Paraguayan executive office officials), a Presidency source said the president felt the visit was a success. His first goal in traveling to the Summit - bilateral networking - was accomplished in meetings with Presidents Uribe, Vazquez, and Lagos. The meetings were conducted behind closed doors, and little could be discovered about the substance of the talks. Ecuadorian officials denied that aerial coca fumigations in southern Colombia - a touchy subject here - was discussed by the presidents at the Palacio-Uribe meeting, saying that chancellors of the two countries would handle the matter later. The Palacio - Uruguayan President Vazquez meeting amounted to little more than a courtesy call. According to a palace official, Palacio and Lagos discussed the Chilean president's anticipated visit to Ecuador, date as yet unknown.

#### Palacio Speaks in Favor of South American Integration

-----

3. (U) In comments to the press at the end of the summit, Palacio proclaimed himself satisfied with the accomplishment of his second objective for the trip: "For the first time, Ecuador presented a clear idea for South American Union; we begin to look south without giving up looking north." Indeed, his ten-minute speech before the assembled summit body could hardly be seen as anything but pro-integration. He called the rapprochement between Mercosur and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) an opportunity for the South American countries to "become what they all dreamed of: true and powerful nations." Palacio also highlighted the need for increased investment in science and technology.

4. (U) Palacio finished the speech with a reference to that favorite symbol of South American union, Simon Bolivar. After closing with the expression of his belief that Bolivar "has awakened and is perhaps among us," he received the congratulations of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Though Palacio was not granted a private meeting with Chavez, the Venezuelan president later made it clear that he did not feel any rancor towards the Ecuadorian government as a whole over GOE Administrative Secretary Herreria's June 10 anti-Chavez remarks (Reftel).

#### Comment

-----

5. (C) President Palacio's words during the summit in favor of integration and a new economic order in the region were not surprising. However, they cannot be viewed without some concern when placed in the context of his Minister of Economy's Bolivarianesque agenda, and the president's overt kowtowing to Chavez. In light of the recent minor diplomatic drama between the GOE and Chavez, it can be safely assumed that part of Palacio's aim in invoking Bolivar during his speech was to distance himself from his secretary's words. Aside from this, however, the trip was somewhat of a non-event, with no remarkable moments of statesmanship, little (if any) substantive political outcome, and the completion of an agenda that was vague at best. For a first foray into the world of regional politics, though, this is about what we would expect from Palacio.  
Kenney